

THE TEN EMERGING

Truths

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR GIRLS 11–17



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

TODAY, THERE ARE 14 MILLION GIRLS AGES 11–17 IN THE UNITED STATES. IF THEY REPRESENTED A CITY, ITS POPULATION WOULD BE GREATER THAN THAT OF NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES, AND CHICAGO COMBINED. IF A STATE, ITS POPULATION WOULD NUMBER TWO MILLION MORE THAN THAT OF ILLINOIS. THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND OF THESE GIRLS ARE CURRENTLY GIRL SCOUTS. MORE THAN 14 MILLION COULD BE GIRL SCOUTS. TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW TO DEVELOP AND ENHANCE GIRL SCOUTING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THESE GIRLS, GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA (GSUSA) EMBARKED ON ONE OF THE LARGEST NATIONAL RESEARCH INITIATIVES EVER UNDERTAKEN BY THE ORGANIZATION AMONG PRETEEN AND TEENAGE GIRLS.

New Directions for Girls 11–17 is a research, program, membership, and volunteer development initiative to greatly enhance the range of options available for preteen and teen girls. If the program for 11- to 17-year-old girls were to be looked at anew, with the possibility of major redesign, what would it look like? What would girls want it to look like? How can Girl Scouts create and deliver activities, resources, and events that will be perceived by girls as cool and fun, while promoting the four program goals that help girls grow healthy and strong?

New Directions capitalizes on the momentum of current organizational priorities such as a recommitment to reaching “Every Girl, Everywhere” and the positioning of the brand image of Girl Scouts as a contemporary girl-focused organization.

The *New Directions for Girls 11–17* research study gave girls the opportunity to voice what they care about and share their hopes, dreams, challenges, and fears. Over 3,000 girls participated in the study. They mirrored the 14 million girls ages 11–17 in the United States today, varying in race/ethnicity, geographical location, and socioeconomic background. Yet these 3,000 girls have in common many of the same experiences, pressures, interests, and goals that will shape them into tomorrow’s young women.

GSUSA is the world’s largest organization committed to serving every girl, everywhere. More than 40 million girls have taken part in Girl Scouting since it was founded 90 years ago. Today, 87 percent of girls 11–17 state there are definite advantages to being part of an all-girl organization. However, according to the GSUSA year-end membership report for 2001, of today’s 14 million girls ages 11–17, Girl Scouts is reaching nearly 530,000 girls in this age range (or 4 percent of the available population). The imperative to move in new directions is clear.

In its continuing commitment to reach all girls and to develop program options to meet the needs of today’s girls, GSUSA commissioned this *New Directions for Girls 11–17* research study to be conducted by Partners In Brainstorms (PIB), a youth market research firm that specializes in the preteen and teen girl market and national youth brand repositioning campaigns. This project was initiated under the joint auspices of GSUSA’s Girl Scout Research Institute and the Program Development Department to greatly enhance the range of options available in Girl Scouting for girls this age.

RESEARCH SCOPE OF *NEW DIRECTIONS*

Based on GSUSA's ongoing goal of offering a program that meets the needs and wants of today's girls, the research was designed to address the overall program goals of *New Directions for Girls 11–17*:

- 1. TO GREATLY ENHANCE THE RANGE OF OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO 11- TO 17- YEAR-OLD GIRLS IN GIRL SCOUTING.**
- 2. TO MAKE GIRL SCOUTS MORE APPEALING TO GIRLS AGES 11–17.**
- 3. TO EDUCATE THE GIRL SCOUT CONSTITUENCY AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS AGES 11–17 AND THEIR IDEAS ABOUT AN “IDEAL PROGRAM EXPERIENCE FOR GIRLS.”**
- 4. TO EDUCATE ADULTS ABOUT WHAT GIRLS NEED, WANT, AND EXPECT IN THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH ADULTS IN THE GROUP.**

The *New Directions* research and program development efforts that will ensue are a result of a mandate from GSUSA's 1999 National Council Session. Key stakeholders have shaped the project from its inception, including young women, national board members, Girl Scout council* staff, and GSUSA staff. Representatives from all stakeholder groups with a significant role in enhancing Girl Scouts for girls 11–17 participated in the research: girls at large, current Girl Scouts, volunteers and parents, and Girl Scout council staff. The *New Directions* research in 2001 consisted of three “branches”:

1. TAKING THE PULSE WITH GIRL SCOUTS, ADULT VOLUNTEERS, AND PARENTS

From the fall of 2000 through the summer of 2001, GSUSA staff members from several departments heard firsthand from current Girl Scouts 11–17, adult volunteers, and council staff members about their “top of the mind” issues, preferences, and ideas related to serving girls 11–17. This research was conducted on a national level primarily through focus groups, written and on-line surveys, and telephone interviews. Data was gathered directly from the GSUSA councils, regional conferences, and other GSUSA-sponsored events. Collectively, these “pulse points” helped to create both the framework and context for the other branches of *New Directions* research.

2. UNDERSTANDING HOW GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS SERVE GIRLS 11–17

GSUSA contracted with SJB Consulting Inc., the research firm of Sylvia Barsion, Ph.D., former National Director of Leadership Development and Research at GSUSA, to explore how Girl Scout councils are designing, managing, and delivering the Girl Scout program for girls 11–17. During the spring and summer of 2001, Dr. Barsion conducted in-depth interviews with executive directors and then with staff teams at 40 Girl Scout councils around the country. The forty councils were selected to generate input from a wide range of council experiences, geographic areas, and diverse populations. Interviews helped GSUSA learn more about building on successes and addressing challenges at the national level.

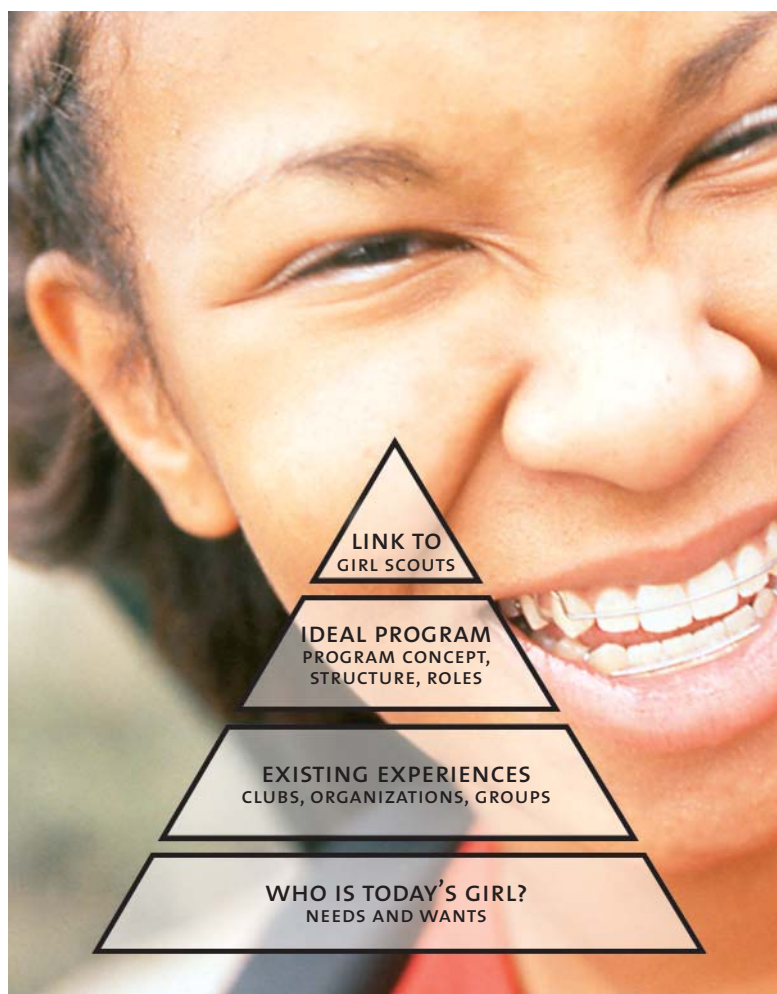
3. THE TEN EMERGING TRUTHS FROM GIRLS AT LARGE

The findings discussed in the pages that follow are from quantitative and qualitative research that was conducted with girls 11–17, with an emphasis on girls who were not current Girl Scout members. To understand the needs and preferences of potential girl members in the 11–17 age range, GSUSA worked with Partners In Brainstorms (PIB). The research study was designed to assess the needs and interests of girls today; insights about ideal programs for girls, including activities and products; and

thoughts about how girls would like to partner with adults in program settings.

THIS RESEARCH WAS STRATEGICALLY DESIGNED AS A FOUR-TIERED PROCESS:

- 1. WHO IS TODAY'S GIRL?** It was imperative that the foundation of the research be a realistic and thorough understanding of girls 11–17 in today's environment—their needs, wants, hopes, dreams, challenges, and fears.
- 2. EXISTING EXPERIENCES:** The research then explored the girls' existing experiences—their likes and dislikes concerning youth groups, organizations, and clubs.
- 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEAL PROGRAM:** Building on these personal experiences, the girls developed their ideal program in terms of the concept, program components, range of options, structure, and roles of the girls and adult volunteers.
- 4. LINK TO GIRL SCOUTS:** Lastly, Girl Scouts was introduced to the participants as the organization that would offer such a program concept. This allowed the girls to develop and build on their ideal program concept without any preconceived notions or parameters that they might have unconsciously imposed on the program associated with Girl Scouting. The result is a program concept that was truly created for girls by girls.



* THERE ARE 317 GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY THAT COMPRISE THE NETWORK OF GIRL SCOUTING LOCAL AFFILIATES.



METHODOLOGY

THE NEW DIRECTIONS FOR GIRLS 11–17 RESEARCH STUDY CONTAINS DATA COLLECTED FROM OVER 3,000 GIRLS AGES 11–17 DURING THE NINE-MONTH PERIOD OF MAY 2001 THROUGH JANUARY 2002. APPROXIMATELY 75 PERCENT OF GIRLS 11–17 PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY WERE NON-GIRL SCOUT MEMBERS; THE REMAINING 25 PERCENT WERE CURRENT GIRL SCOUTS. SEVERAL METHODOLOGIES WERE USED TO GET A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR LIVES. THE RESEARCH CONSISTED OF THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Thirty focus group interviews were conducted from May 16 through August 9, 2001 in seven cities representing the four geographical regions of the United States designated by the U.S. Census Bureau, specifically the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, and the West. A total of 269 girls ages 11–17 participated in the groups. Four of the 30 groups were Hispanic and were conducted either in Spanish or English, depending on the individual participant's preference. All participants underwent an extensive screening process to assure a representative population of girls 11–17 in terms of race/ethnicity, geographical location, and socioeconomic background.
- During the focus group interviews, the girls shared their personal photographs, images from magazines and other publications, and their favorite items, allowing a more thorough and individualized understanding of the life of each girl.
- A written survey consisting of open-ended questions that delved into current hopes, dreams, challenges, and fears of girls 11–17 was completed by each of the girls participating in the focus group interviews.
- Parents of the girls involved in the study completed a written survey consisting of 10 open-ended questions that allowed them to share their opinions regarding current issues facing their daughters and what they would like to see in an organization or group that would be of interest to their daughters.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

- A comprehensive 30-question on-line survey was posted from August 10 through September 10, 2001 on «www.girlscouts.org» and on a host Web site affiliated with Partners in Brainstorms. A total of 1,262 girls ages 11–17 participated in the survey, of whom 761 were non-Girl Scouts or former Scouts and 501 were current Girl Scouts. The participants represented 47 of the 50 states, and an extensive screening process ensured that the racial and ethnic diversity of the girls in the sample—as well as their representation of rural, suburban, and urban households and socioeconomic status—mirrored the U.S. youth population as per the U.S. Census. **It is important to note that this on-line survey concluded the day before the tragic events of September 11, 2001; therefore, it provided data that clearly depicted the needs, wants, and desires of girls 11–17 without any external or internal influences resulting from that day.**
- To fully understand the impact of the events of September 11th, a follow-up 15-question on-line survey was conducted from December 19, 2001 through January 2, 2002. A total of 1,480 girls ages 11–17 participated, of whom 633 were non-Girl Scouts, 491 were former Scouts, and 354 were current Girl Scouts. The girls represented a wide cross-section of geographic location (all 50 states), race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. The on-line survey also tracked any difference in girls' responses among those living in directly affected areas versus the United States in general.

SAMPLE

DIVERSITY

In a continuing commitment to reach every girl, everywhere, the *New Directions for Girls 11–17* research study involved girls from diverse racial/ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Girls from all fifty states were represented over the course of the study, as was the range from rural to urban settings.

The overall racial and ethnic breakdown of the 3,011 research participants roughly mirrored the United States population of girls 11–17 based on the 2000 U.S. Census data, as seen in the chart below.

THREE AGE GROUPINGS

It became clear during preliminary research that girls 11–17 represent not one age group, but three. Consequently, a framework of three distinct age groups was used throughout the study. Based on developmental, physical, emotional, and social differences among girls 11–17, the research examined differences and similarities among these three age groups: Preteens (ages 11 and 12), Teens (ages 13–15), and Young Women (ages 16 and 17).

GIRL SCOUT AFFILIATION

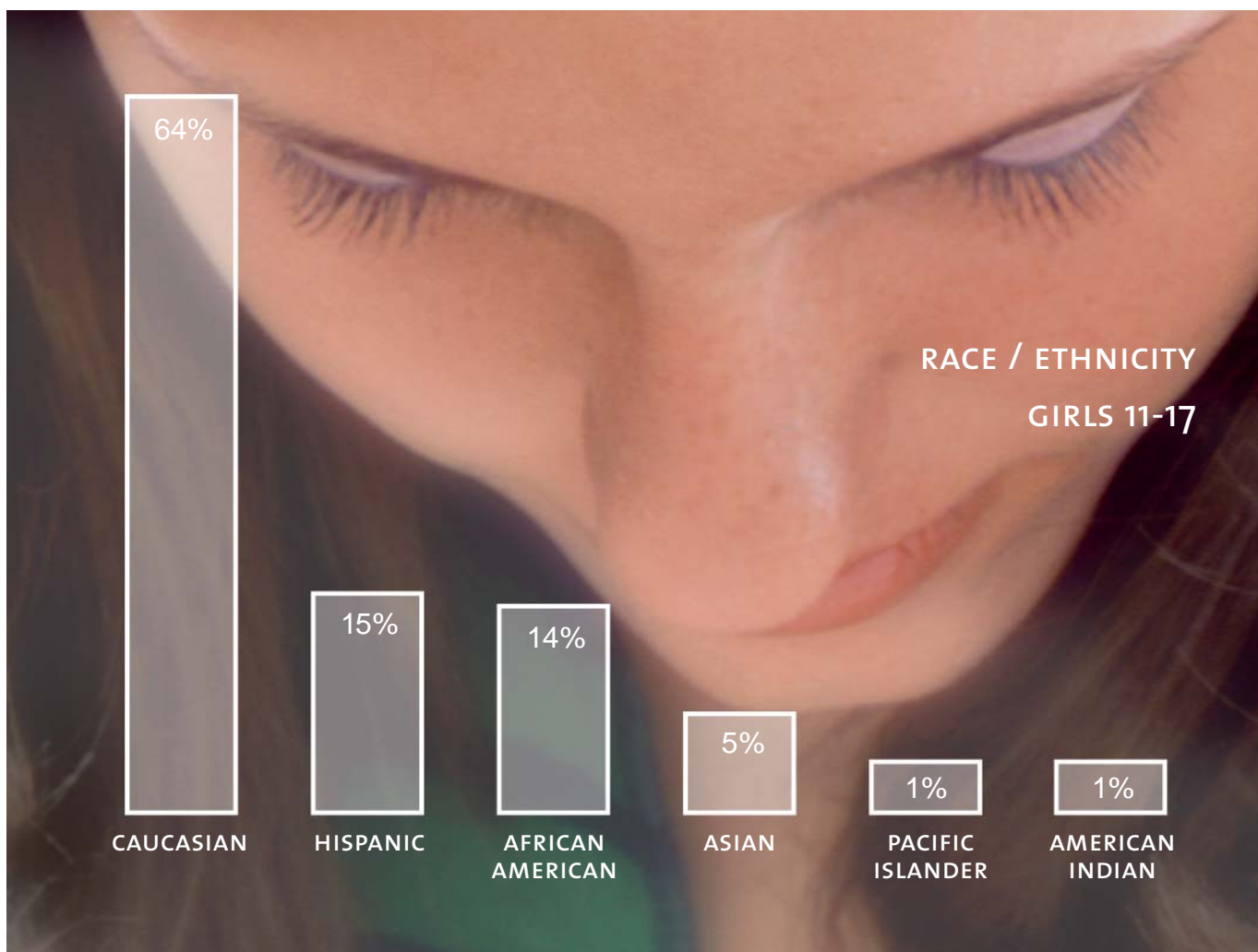
The sample was also weighted so that three-quarters (75 percent) of the total responses came from girls who were not current Girl Scouts, while the remaining one-quarter (25 percent)

were current Girl Scout members (Cadettes, 11–13 years old, and Seniors, 14–17 years old). Overall, the greatest differences in participant responses occurred among the three age groups rather than among groupings defined by race/ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic background, or Girl Scout affiliation.

PRESERVING GIRLS' VOICES

This *New Directions for Girls 11–17* Executive Summary clearly identifies an important role that girls' programs can play in the lives of girls 11–17. The report captures girls' voices and preserves the way girls express themselves. Insights from girls, quotes, hand-written entries, and comments shared via the on-line surveys are incorporated throughout the summary. Spelling has been corrected, but not the girls' word choices. Grammatical errors have been remedied only where this could be done unobtrusively, without risk of changing the girls' meanings or authentic modes of expression.

The Executive Summary highlights the key findings from both the qualitative and quantitative research based on ten concise and important truths about today's girls 11–17. These Ten Emerging Truths conclude with a statement of the implications for GSUSA based on the research findings and offer suggestions for new program elements that meet the needs of today's girls 11–17.



SOURCE: RACE/ETHNICITY OF 3,011 PARTICIPANTS IN THE *NEW DIRECTIONS FOR GIRLS 11-17* RESEARCH STUDY.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS —

THE TEN EMERGING TRUTHS

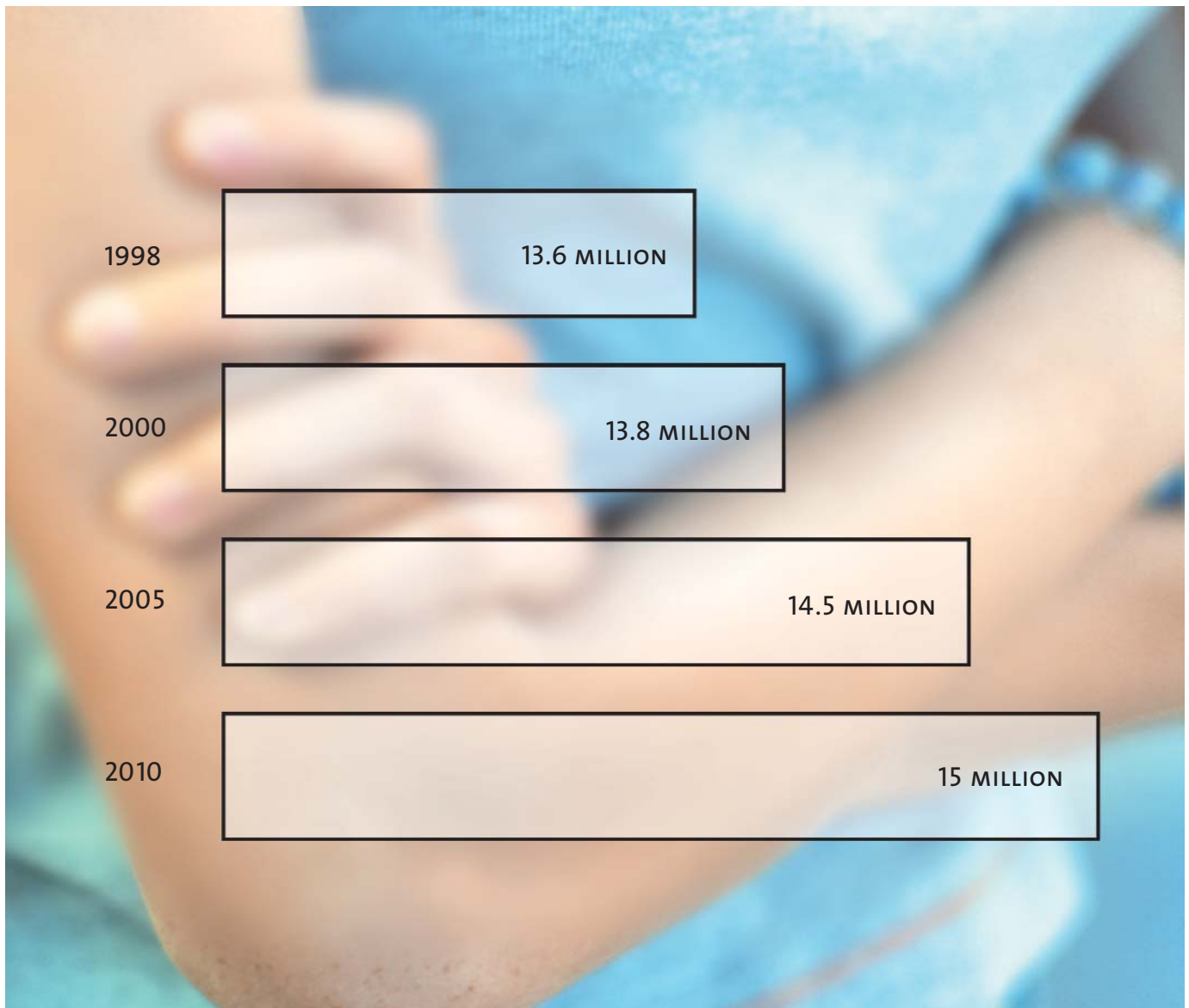


Truth #1

GIRLS 11–17 REPRESENT NEW AND GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

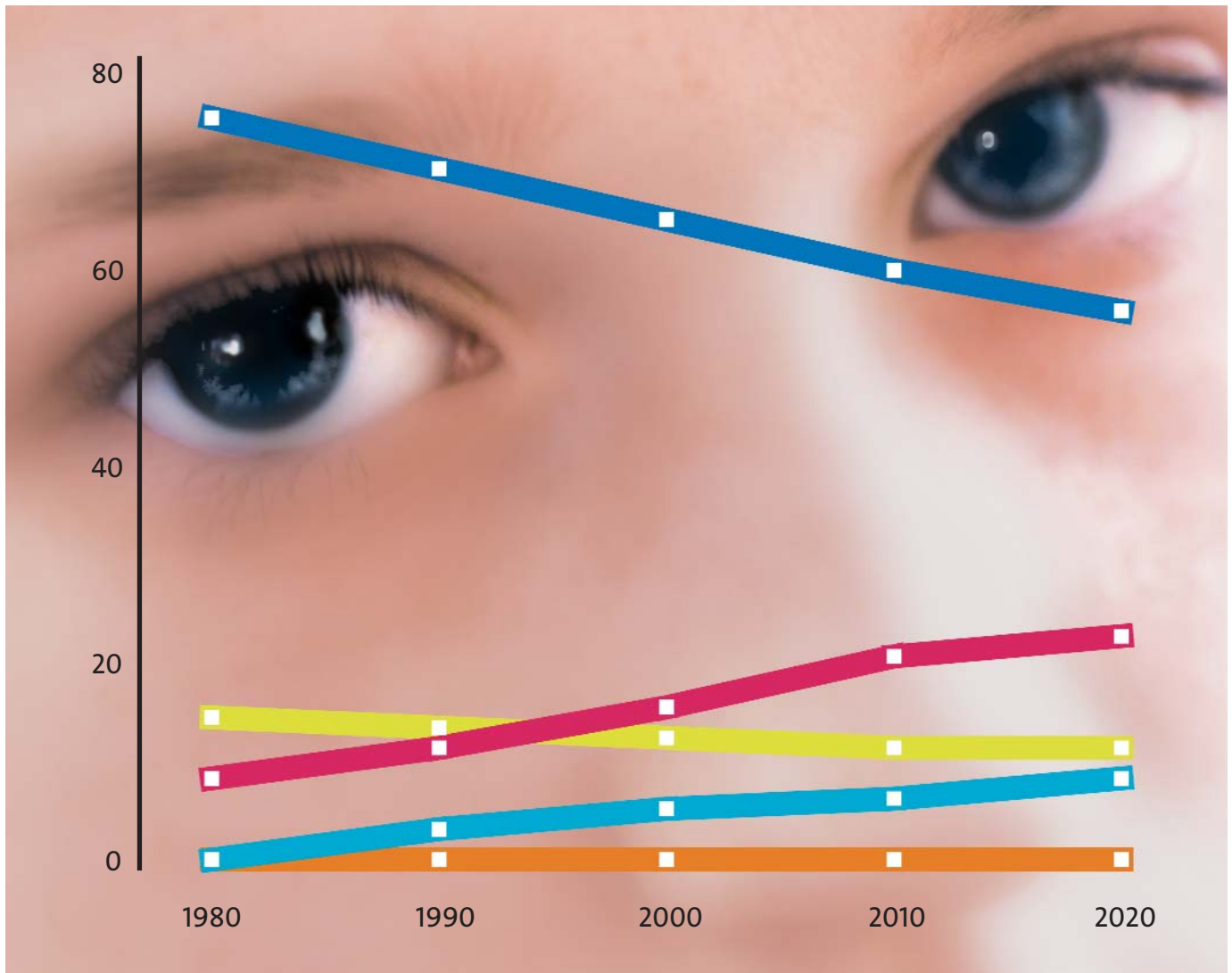
POPULATION GROWTH AMONG GIRLS 11–17

In 2000, there were 72.3 million children in the United States, and that figure is projected to grow by another 10 percent by the year 2020. In the 1990s, the rate of growth in the number of children saw an increase after two decades of decline and slow growth.² Girls 11–17 in 2000 numbered 13.8 million and are expected to grow to approximately 15.0 million by the year 2010.³

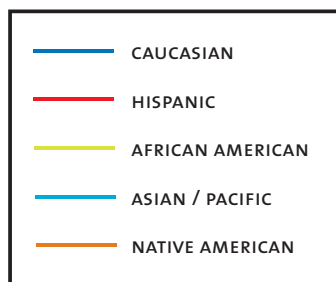


SOURCE: CENSUS 2000. U.S. CENSUS BUREAU. FIGURES INDICATE THE POPULATIONS OF GIRLS AGES 11–17.

DIVERSITY INCREASING AMONG GIRLS 11–17



SOURCE: CENSUS 2000. U.S. CENSUS BUREAU. FIGURES INDICATE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION OF GIRLS AGES 11–17.



DIVERSITY INCREASING AMONG GIRLS 11–17

The diversity among this age group is changing dramatically. The total number of races counted in the U.S. Census 2000 was 63, including 57 multiple-race categories. The largest census-to-census increase occurred in the Hispanic or Latino population, with a 58 percent increase from 1990 to 2000. This is the largest increase since the Census Bureau began collecting data on this ethnic group in 1970.⁴

Among girls ages 11–17, over the next two decades it is expected that the Caucasian/White and African American/Black ethnic groups will decrease as an overall percentage of the total, while Hispanic and Asian ethnic groups will increase as the result of birth and immigration rates.

GIRLS 11–17 LOOKING FOR GROUPS THAT ALLOW “CONNECTIONS”

Adolescent and teen girls are looking for a sense of intimacy and closeness—to connect with girls around them. This need to connect is even more apparent since the events of September 11th.

I WOULD LIKE
TO BELONG TO
SOMETHING WHERE
I COULD MAKE
NEW FRIENDS AND
HELP OTHER GIRLS
FEEL BETTER, LIKE
THEY BELONG.

BRITTANY, AGE 11

TODAY'S GIRLS 11–17 ARE “JOINERS”

Even with the growing demands of school, 98 percent of non-Girl Scouts ages 11–17 belong to at least one group or club. Among current Girl Scouts, 100 percent belong to at least one additional group or club.

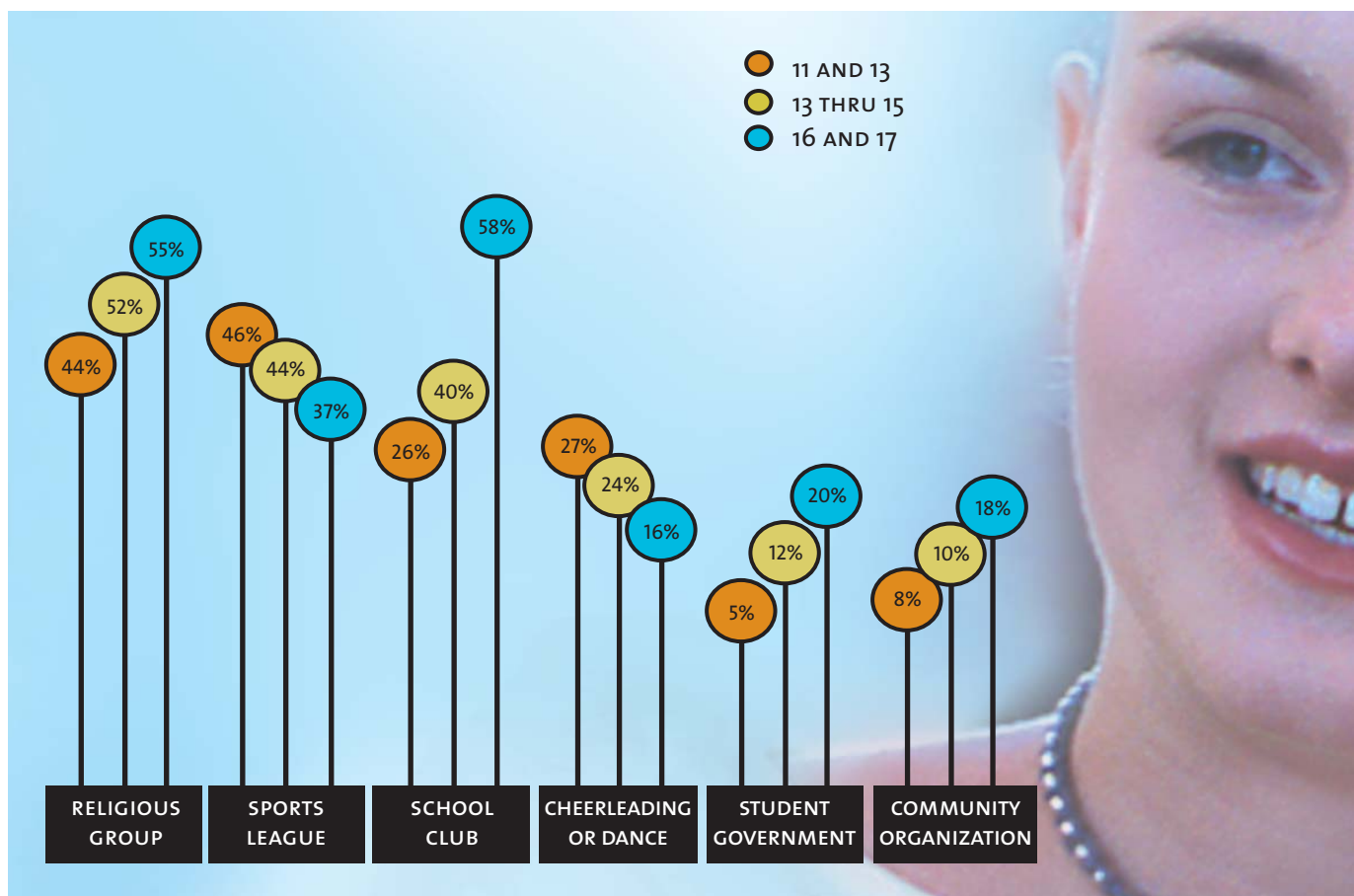
Half (50 percent) of girls 11–17 belong to a religious youth group, and 43 percent are involved in a sports league or team. While involvement in a religious youth group increases with age—from 44 percent among 11- and 12-year-olds to 55 percent among girls 16 and 17, participation in a sports league or team decreases with age—from 46 percent among 11- and 12-year-old girls to 37 percent among 16- and 17-year-olds. The rate of membership in a school club or group doubles as a girl makes the transition from middle to high school, where a greater number and variety of extra-curricular school activities and groups are offered.

Looking at the variances in youth group membership among racial/ethnic groups, we find the following:

SPORTS LEAGUE OR TEAM: Caucasian/White girls 11–17 were more likely to be members of a sports team—at 46 percent participation—than were Hispanic girls (at 40 percent) or African American/Black girls (at 36 percent).

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS: African American/Black girls were more inclined to be involved with community-based organizations such as a community center—at 17 percent participation—than were Caucasian/White girls (at 10 percent) and Hispanic girls (at 9 percent).

WHAT YOUTH GROUPS OR CLUBS DO YOU BELONG TO?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.



Truth #2

GIRLS 11–17 REPRESENT THREE DISTINCT AGE GROUPS

At 11 and 12 you are not really a kid anymore, but you are not a teenager, yet, you're in-between. It's strange because you are getting pressure to do things that you should wait until you are older, and it's hard... Sometimes you wish you were still 9 or 10.

BRYNA, AGE 12

One can no longer look at girls 11–17 as one group; they are in fact three distinct age groups representing different levels of physical, emotional, and social development. During the course of the *New Directions for Girls 11–17* research study, three distinct age groups were identified: Preteens (ages 11 and 12), Teens (ages 13–15), and Young Women (ages 16 and 17).

GIRLS 11 and 12: TRANSITIONAL YEARS

Often referred to as preteens or tweens, girls of 11 and 12 are, in fact, experiencing traditional teen pressures in such areas as sexual activity and the use of drugs and alcohol, as documented in the Girl Scout Research Institute *Teens Before Their Time* study.⁵ They are leaving the safety of elementary school to go to middle school, and with that move come pressures to adapt, to grow up quickly, to be liked and accepted by others. The girl of 11 or 12 is truly a “tween”—caught between being a kid and being a teen—and does not feel wholly comfortable in either group.

For my daughter at 12 years old, there is pressure to be accepted among her friends, to fit in socially. Also at this age, her body is changing and there are emotional concerns related to these changes.
– Rebecca, mother of Molly, age 12

Friendships are a priority for girls 11 and 12, and this need to be liked by others is a driving factor in terms of their self-image. Girls 11 and 12 also appear to be the most community oriented; they want to help others and are the most idealistic about the world, often having a sense of wonder and hope.

GIRLS 13–15: RITE OF PASSAGE OF THE “ME” GENERATION

In prior generations, the “Sweet Sixteen” party was revered as the formal celebration of the rite of passage from girlhood to young womanhood. Today, this rite of passage occurs when a girl turns 13, for now she is “officially a teen.” While girls at this age may outwardly appear self-confident and in control, distancing themselves from their parents, they are in fact highly vulnerable to peer pressure.

When I turned 13, everything changed! You are now officially a teenager but you are not ready for a lot of what is happening to you – the peer pressure, pressure from boys, pressure to look a certain way, family pressures. It's hard because your friends are going through it too and you don't know what to do.

– Kendra, age 13

I think it's a strange year. People will do things that they regret later, more so than they do in other years. For example, I know a lot of people who get into drugs with pot and drinking. And then once they're older, they realize that was pretty stupid.

– Jennifer, age 14

The greatest pressure on girls the ages of 13–15 is their physical attributes. There is a tremendous pressure of being thin and beautiful.
– Dawne, mother of Megan, age 14

Girls 13–15 are focused on “me.” At this age, their fears center on the immediate, the here and now. Do boys like me? How do I look? Am I popular? It is during this period that girls feel a great deal of pressure to “act in a certain way.” Many of the girls talked about having or knowing someone who had an eating disorder related to being and looking thin.

GIRLS 16 and 17: PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

Young women ages 16 and 17 were up-front about expressing their new found independence associated with being old enough to drive. At the same time, these teens talked about the extreme level of pressures they are experiencing—to succeed in school, to get into the “right” college, and to make something of themselves.



Adults always say they understand, but really they don't. We are growing up in a society where as teenagers we can't be just girls, but young women who are being stressed out to be perfect in every respect. We are being told to grow up and take on more responsibilities, to achieve good grades, and to go into the world and make something of ourselves.

– Jennifer, age 17

Colleges are continuously raising their standards so we have to work twice as hard. Girls understand this and I think the program will be stronger for it.

– Tiana, age 16

In terms of an ideal program, girls of 16 and 17 are looking for activities that can help them develop a skill set—a combination of tools they can use to deal with adult-size pressures during these teen years as well as those they can use to achieve their goals.

GIRLS 11 AND 12	GIRLS 13 THRU 15	GIRLS 16 AND 17
<p>DEFINING MOMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from elementary to middle school <p>IMAGE OF SELF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to be liked <p>WORRIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fitting in” • Teen pressures <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about friendships • Outdoor and sport-related activities • Improving self-confidence 	<p>DEFINING MOMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rite of passage – now officially a teenager <p>IMAGE OF SELF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Me”-focused <p>WORRIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys not liking me • How I look • Pressures to act in a certain way • Eating disorders <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing your self-image • Taking trips • Music 	<p>DEFINING MOMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence – old enough to drive <p>IMAGE OF SELF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to achieve success <p>WORRIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressed out • Becoming somebody • Getting into the “right” college <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career possibilities • Self-defense • Managing your time



Truth #3

GIRLS NEED A SAFE PLACE...SAFE SPACE

SAFE PLACE ... SAFE SPACE PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

In both the focus groups and the first on-line study, girls expressed a need for a safe place, safe space where they could discuss real-life issues. Safety was defined in terms of emotional and physical well-being. Emotional safety centered on a required degree of trust and confidentiality within the group. Trust related to a "need to share what is bothering me with others who will listen and not judge me." Confidentiality was clearly seen as "what is said stays in the room."

I think girls my age need to have a safe place where we can talk with other girls who have similar problems.

– Teresa, age 16

I think we should have a safe place where we can talk about our problems and help in building our self-confidence. If we had more self-confidence, then we would know how to better address these problems and would not be worried about trying to look good, or doing things before we are ready.

– Cecilia, age 15

Twenty seven percent of girls 11–17 said they worry most about personal and physical violence. Often this was voiced as a fear of "date rape," especially among Girl Scouts ages 16 and 17 (33 percent) and among African American girls (34 percent).

But why this growing need to find an emotionally safe place to discuss issues? Many girls talked about not having a place or group where they could talk about "real issues."

It used to be you could go to a teacher and talk, but not any more. They can't talk to you and have to send you to the Guidance Counselor. You don't want that because then you are labeled as weird, not normal, someone to watch out for in school. There's no place for girls like me to just go and talk about problems and issues with other girls. It would be great to have ... a safe place where you could talk and whatever you say stays in the room.

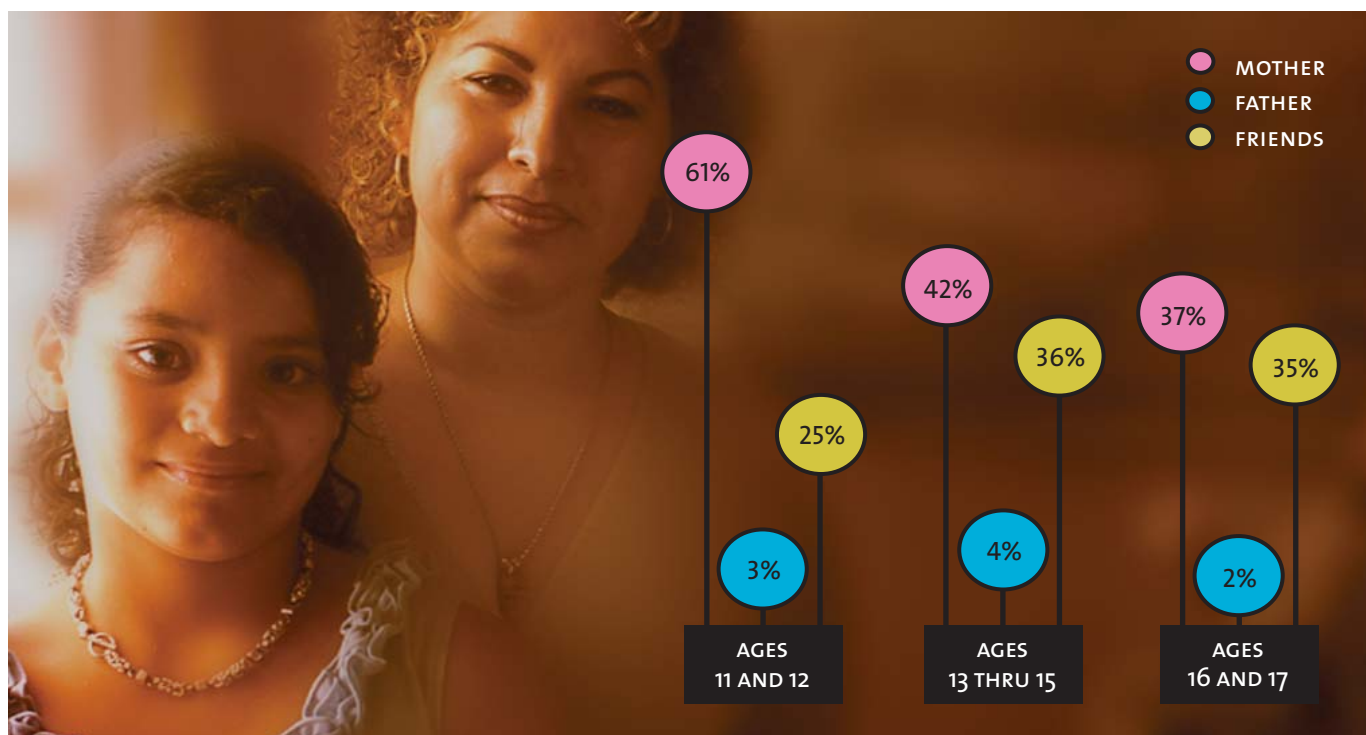
– La Shawna, age 17

When girls were asked who listens and helps them most when they have a problem, mothers clearly dominate at 61 percent—especially among girls 11 and 12. In two-parent households, the frequency of the father taking on the role of confidant was hardly noticeable at 3 percent overall among girls 11–17. Friends begin to assume the role of confidante as girls get older and the mother's role declines.

Well this year the pressure is the fear of not having a boyfriend. Next thing is who is still a virgin and of course that is something that my daughter would never talk to me about, no matter how many times I've tried.

– Michael, father of Krystal, age 13

WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, WHO LISTENS AND HELPS YOU MOST OFTEN?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

IMPACT OF EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Based on an on-line survey conducted three months after the events of September 11th, the emotional effects are still resonating through the daily lives of girls 11–17 living in the United States. Many girls still do not feel safe and worry about their own safety and the safety of their family. As a result, girls are reporting common symptoms of anxiety and depression⁶.

Almost half (46 percent) of the total sample of girls reported that their current feelings range from “a little less safe” to “much less safe” to “I am terrified,” compared to their feelings before September 11th. When asked, “What do you worry about the most?” 36 percent of the total sample of girls reported that they worry most about their safety and the safety of their family since September 11th. Across Girl Scout and non-Girl Scout affiliations, the 11- and 12-year-olds reported significantly more worry about safety than their older counterparts. Surprisingly, geographical differences did not factor into reported levels of safety concerns.

Girls have reported such displays of concern as nightmares (15 percent), consistent worry (14 percent), crying more than usual (14 percent), depression (13 percent), and decreased enjoyment in daily activities (9 percent).

Nationwide, girls have changed many aspects of their daily lives to help themselves feel safer. Specific ways that their normal routines have changed include the feeling that “I won’t travel on an airplane anymore” (19 percent), followed by many restrictions placed by their parents on the girls’ daily routines.

Girls report that talking about the recent terrorist events has been their single most helpful coping mechanism.

I am glad to know that there are people out there that are interested in what we young people think about everything that is happening. Adults are not the only ones affected by this tragedy. It has affected how teenagers think and act just the same. I am glad to know that our opinions matter. It also has affected more than just the people that live in of New York. It can scare anyone to know that this kind of tragedy could happen where they live and to the people they love.

CATHERINE, AGE 16

HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL NOW AS COMPARED TO BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11TH?

GIRLS 11–17



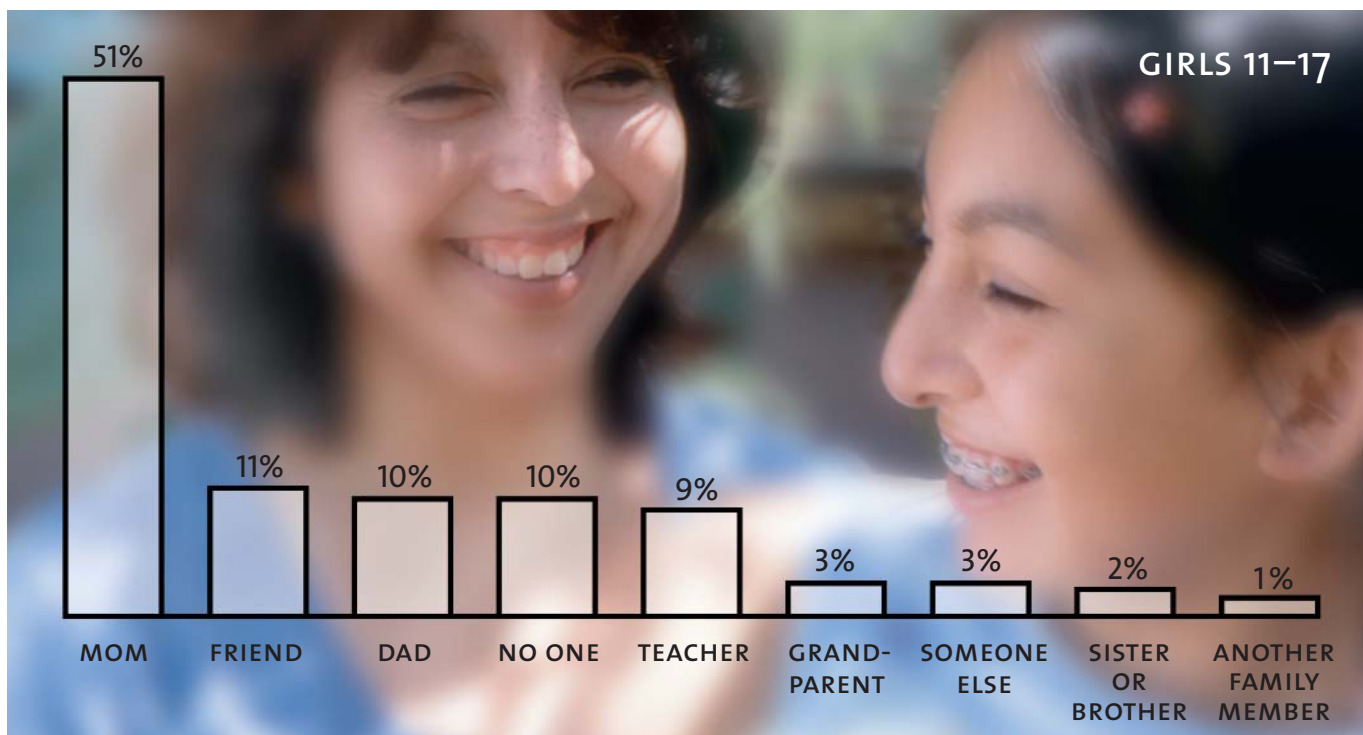
WHAT WAYS HAS YOUR DAILY ROUTINE CHANGED SINCE SEPTEMBER 11?

(GIRLS 11-17)

I WON'T TRAVEL ON AN AIRPLANE ANYMORE	19%
MY PARENTS WON'T ALLOW ME TO TRAVEL ALONE ANYMORE	16%
I HAVE MORE PARENTAL RESTRICTIONS	16%
I AVOID PUBLIC PLACES THAT MIGHT BE TERRORIST TARGETS	12%
I HAVE TO ALWAYS CARRY A BEEPER	10%
I WON'T TRAVEL TO BIG CITIES ANYMORE	5%

THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY DECEMBER 19, 2001 – JANUARY 2, 2002, WITH 1,480 GIRLS RESPONDING.

WHO HAS LISTENED TO YOU AND HELPED YOU THE MOST ABOUT THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, THE LATER THREATS, AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY DECEMBER 19, 2001 – JANUARY 2, 2002, WITH 1,480 GIRLS RESPONDING.

Just over one-quarter (26 percent) of girls reported that talking about the events connected with September 11th was the one activity that has been most helpful to them in coping.

Overwhelmingly, girls named their mother (51 percent) as the person who has listened to them and helped them most often about the events of September 11th, the later threats, and the war on terrorism.

Friends came in second overall at only 11 percent. In research conducted before September 11th, when girls were asked to whom they turn when they have a problem, friends also earned

second place after mothers but were named by a greater percentage—close to one-third (32 percent)—of the respondents.

Shockingly, 10 percent of girls 11-17 stated that no one listens to them concerning their feelings and concerns related to the events of September 11th and terrorism.



Truth #4

GIRLS CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER CONNECTS THEM TO YOU

GIRLS 11–17 WANT GROUP ENVIRONMENTS FOR GIRLS ONLY

Overall, 87 percent of girls 11–17 identified key advantages to being in an all-girl group or organization. The numbers are highest among those girls who are currently experiencing what it means to be in an organization devoted solely to girls—today's Girl Scouts 11–17.

THINK “LINK” — GIRL SCOUTS BECOMES THE CONNECTION

Girls are looking for “high touch” rather than “high tech,” especially in light of the tragic events of September 11th. These girls are looking for an emotional connection with other girls in their lives. Girl Scouts can be the “link” that allows girls to connect with each other.

I like being in all-girl groups because you can share things. Also you form a bond between the girls in the group – you feel you belong.
– Shar, age 14

Among girls 11–17, 92 percent identified the top advantage of being in an all-girl group is that it allows you to relate to other girls because they are experiencing the same problems as you.

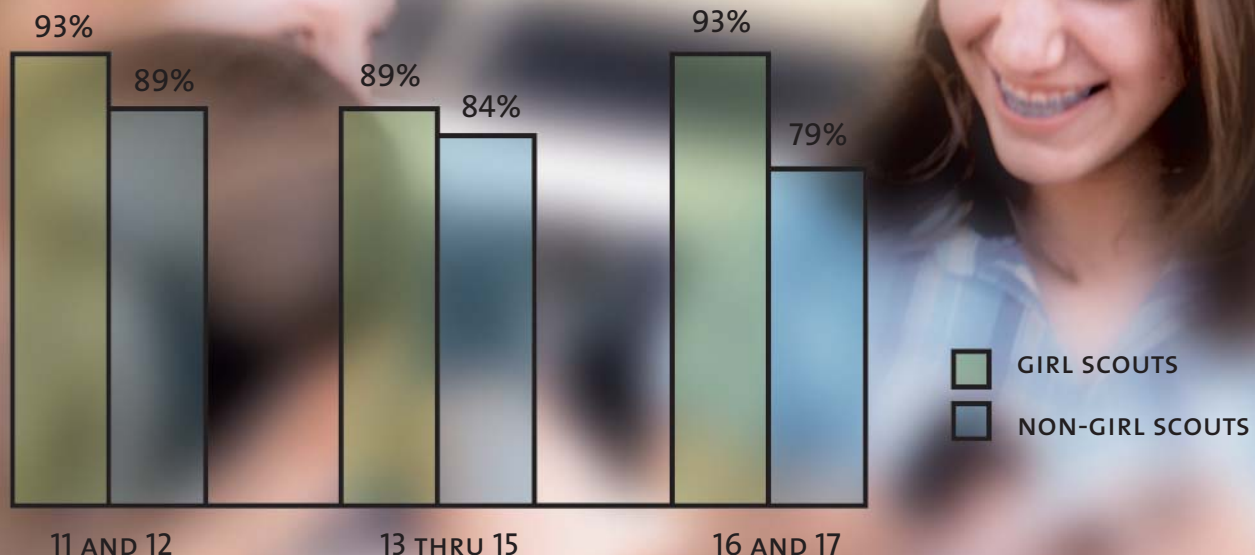
It's personal. I pour my heart out and they (girls) totally understand.
– Meisha, age 16

You can talk about different things with girls that you can't with boys. You can just be yourself and who you are, not something that you're not.
– Taylor, age 12

I think Girl Scouts can be good because there are a lot of things going on now, especially for girls. I think how a lot of girls are going... not on the wrong track, but are questioning how to be themselves. I think Girl Scouts can be a really good way to find yourself. It's just to be with other girls who have similar problems. It's nice to talk.

ELYSE, AGE 11

DO YOU THINK THERE ARE BENEFITS OF HAVING ALL-GIRL GROUPS? (PERCENT RESPONDED “YES”)



IN ALL-GIRL GROUPS, IT IS EASIER TO:	(GIRLS 11–17)
RELATE TO OTHER GIRLS	92%
TALK ABOUT ISSUES YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT IN FRONT OF BOYS	91%
BE YOURSELF	76%
LOOK HOW YOU WANT TO LOOK	57%

THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

Girls talked about being in a “place” that was “judgment free,” where they can be themselves and are valued for their abilities. An all-girl setting gives girls a safe space in which they can be themselves but also are encouraged to share—a place where they can dream of possibilities without the pressures of school, boys, and family.

With girls you can act like yourself. You don't have to be all-afraid because you think they'll make fun of you. With girls you can just act like what you want to act like.

– Taylor, age 12

You are a lot more comfortable with all girls.

– Lauren, age 17

Parents also voiced their approval of their daughter being in an all-girl group. They see it as an opportunity for a safe, inviting, and supportive environment outside of the school setting—one in which their daughter can explore her full potential, openly discuss issues she shares with other girls, and receive encouragement about reaching her personal goals and realizing her dreams.

Yes, there are benefits to my daughter being in an all-girl group because she won't be distracted by boys, won't be so self-conscious of body image, and not subject to the assessment of boys.

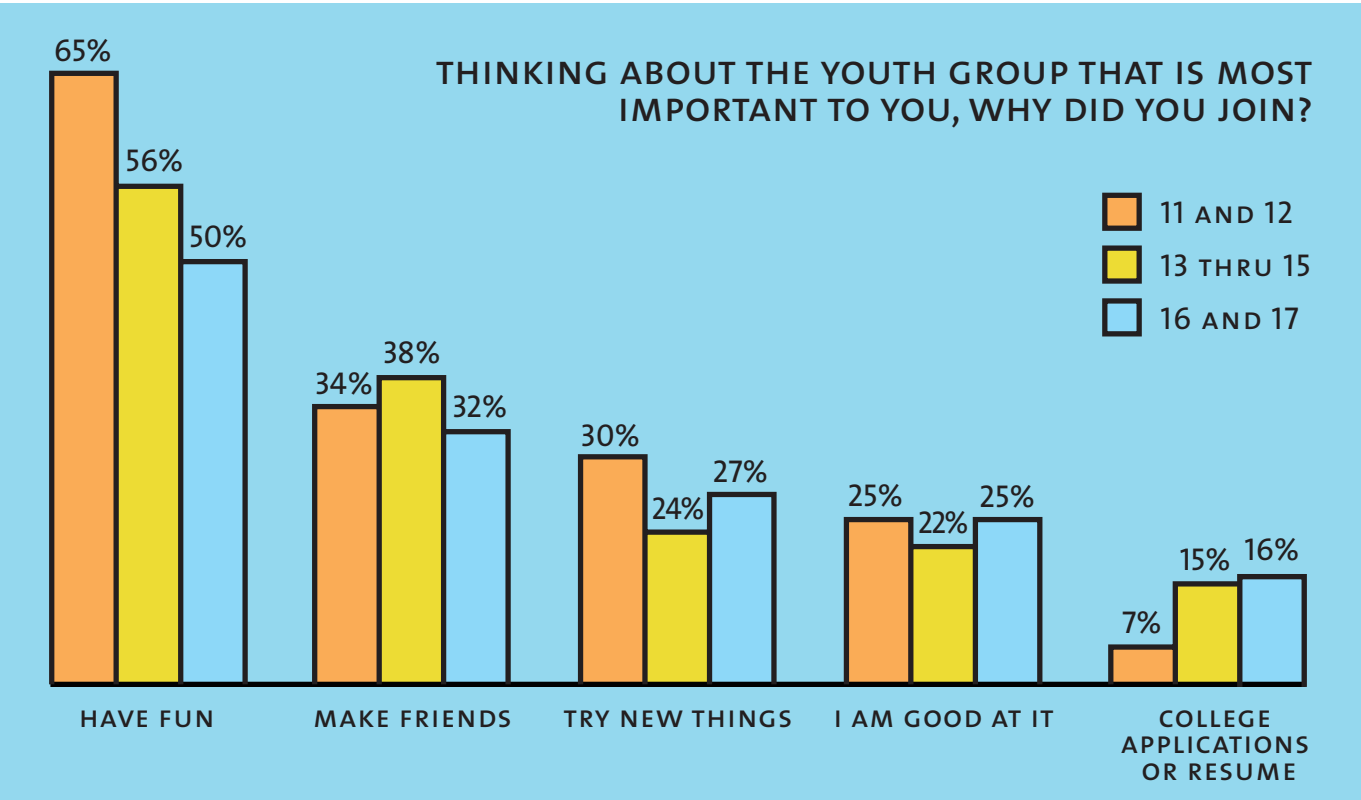
– Diane, mother of Jessica, age 17

TO HAVE FUN – THE PRIMARY REASON FOR JOINING A YOUTH GROUP

It was 90 years ago that Juliette Gordon Low, the founder of Girl Scouts in the United States, first envisioned Girl Scouting as a profound force in the lives of all girls. When asked what the one reason is that a girl should become a Girl Scout, Juliette Gordon Low responded, “Because it’s fun!” This same sentiment is alive and well among today’s girls 11–17. More than one-half stated that, of their primary reasons for joining a youth group, club, or team, the most important to them was to have fun. This quest for fun was highest among pre-teens 11 and 12, at 65 percent. Meeting people and making friends was second, with only slight variations among all age groups.

The group should stand for having fun, being yourself and always doing your best.

– Sandy, age 11



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.



Truth #5

GIRLS WANT EXPANDED OPTIONS

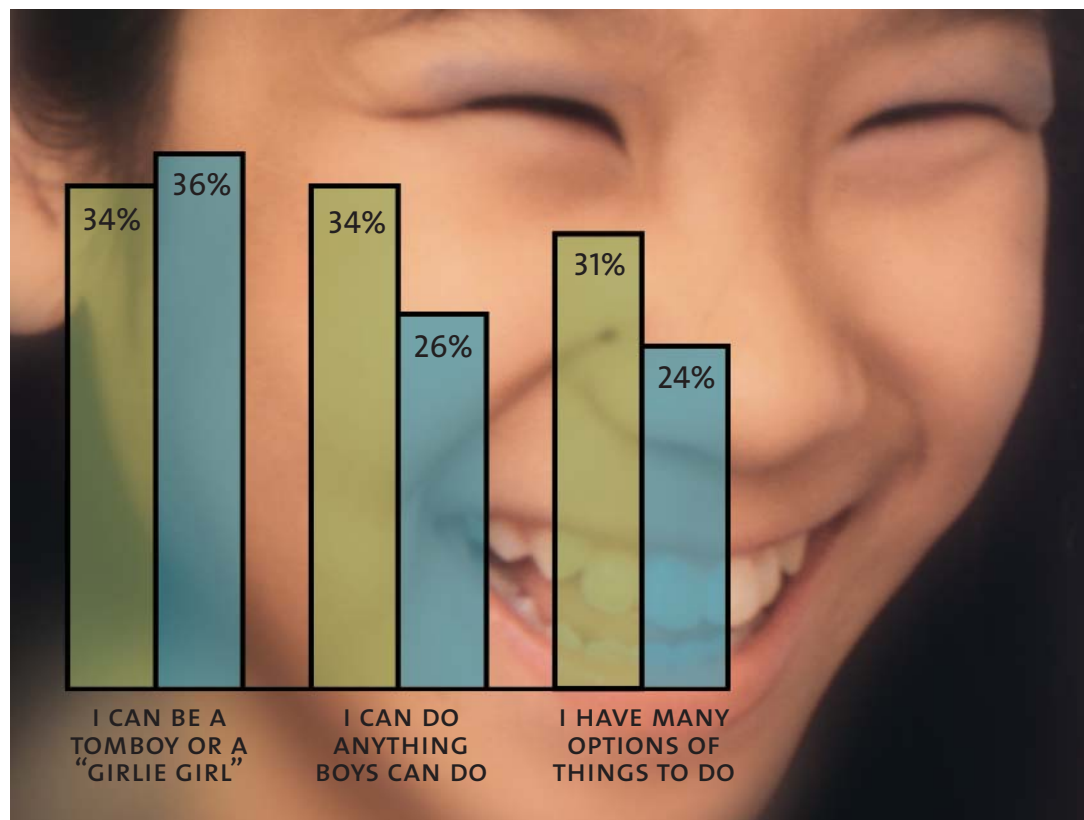
Girls like to have options and choose from a wide range of activities - everything from being a "girlie girl" to more "tomboy" things like camping and sports.

CAITLIN, AGE 11

Being able to choose options from a full range of activities is also one of the things girls like best about being a girl—so naturally that same attitude would apply to their selection of activities. Spending time outdoors, participating in sports, taking trips, improving self-confidence, dealing with emotions, taking self-defense classes and exploring career possibilities—girls want expanded options of activities. Boys gravitate to those activities within the adventure spectrum, whereas girls say, “bring it all on and let us choose.” Girls want to do everything, from traditional activities to more experience-based activities where they learn by doing, even when it relates to emotional issues that they can share with other girls.

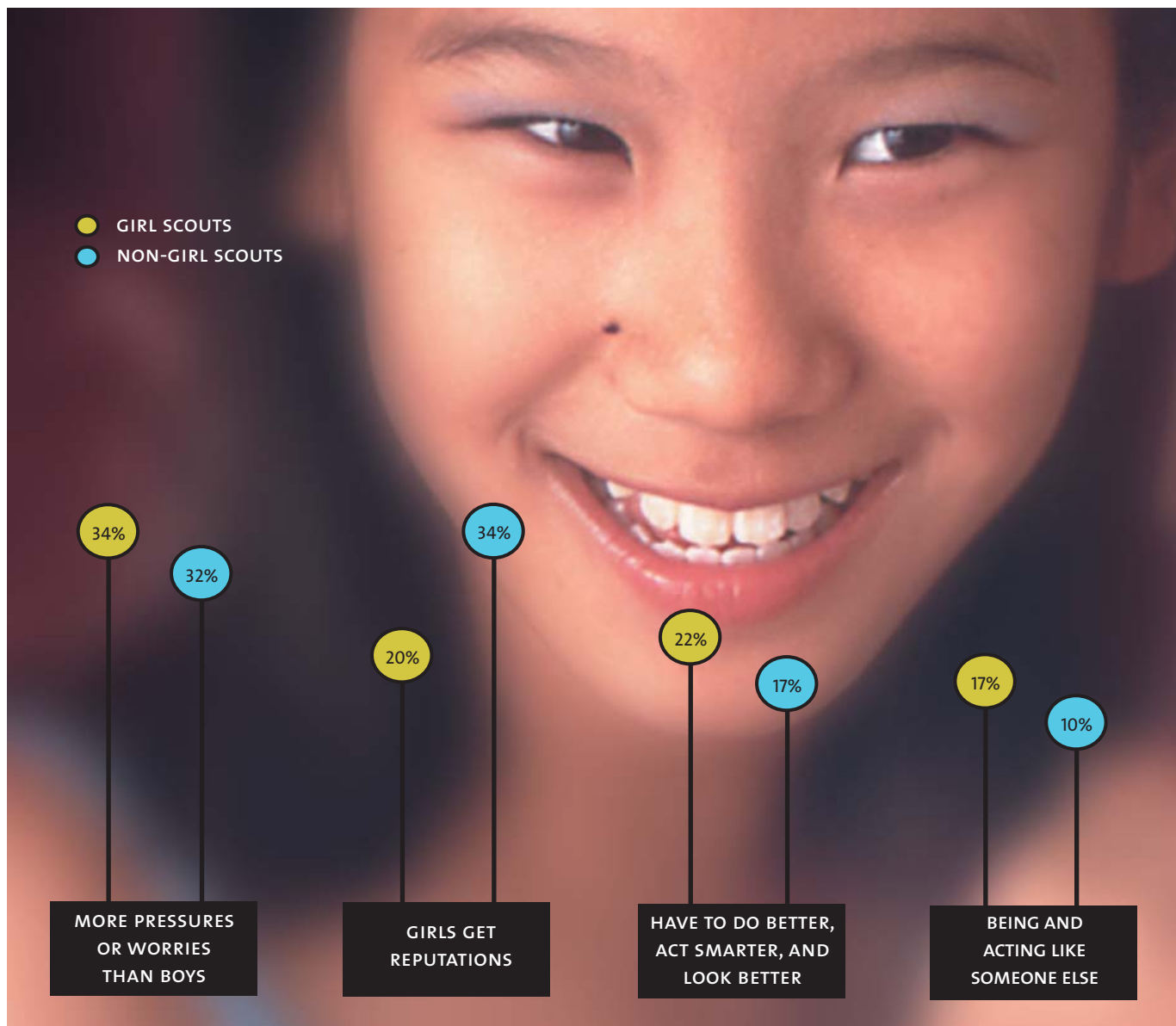
The range of activities that girls 11–17 desire also addresses things that they like least about being a girl: they want programs and activities that enable them to address issues and concerns related to peer pressures and developing their self-image.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT BEING A GIRL?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST ABOUT BEING A GIRL?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

Furthermore, girls demand activities that are experience based. They want to learn by doing, even when it relates to emotional issues that they can share with other girls.

I think that Girl Scouts is supposed to be an adventure. I think it should be more hands on because you have to figure it out for yourself. It can't just be all from a book. That's not how life is supposed to be. You need to experience it for yourself and share it and connect it with the other girls.

– Meisha, age 16

Girls want to “talk and deal” with real issues that are important to them. When asked what they would want to talk about in this new program, 69 percent of girls 11–17 want to discuss topics that are “important to girls my age,” followed by 46 percent who want to talk about “problems and things that are bothering me at school or at home” and 41 percent who want to address current “peer pressures.” These top three topics are not mutually exclusive, and they clearly overlap. The fourth choice overall is talking about individual “interests and hobbies”; among the younger set of girls, 11 and 12, it ranks highest at 44 percent. Within these categories differences exist that are in line with the psychological

differences and pressures experienced by girls in the three distinct age groups of Preteens (11 and 12), Teens (13–15), and Young Women (16 and 17) years old.

When asked what they would want to “learn and do” in this new program just for girls, “building self-confidence” was very important in all age groups, while “career opportunities” understandably was most requested by girls 16 and 17, who are beginning to think about life after high school.

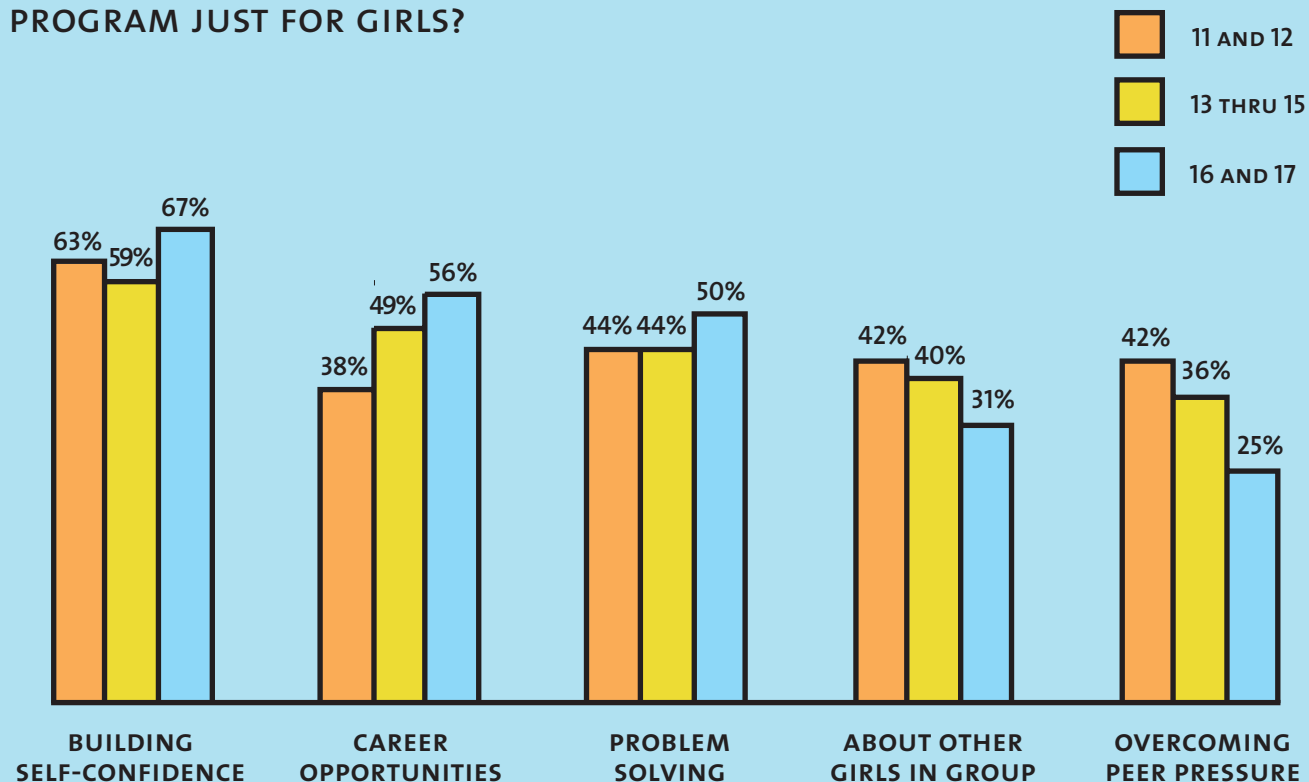
This desire for activities ranging from adventure-based to the more personal activities spans the three age groups. The range of the top five activities within each age group directly reflects the differences among the age groups related to where they are in life psychologically, physically, and socially. In each age group, there are activities that appeal to the whole girl. This is in keeping with the reasoning that if one creates a program that focuses on just one aspect of a girl's life, it ignores other aspects that may be equally important to her.

FAVORITE ACTIVITIES

GIRLS 11 AND 12	GIRLS 13 THRU 15	GIRLS 16 AND 17
1ST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the world around you (Activities related to the environment and helping others) 73% 2ND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting outside – camping 69% 3RD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking about friendships (How to deal with problems or situations that come up with friends) 60% 4TH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving self-confidence 53% 5TH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports 48% 	1ST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalizing your space (Ideas on how to decorate and personalize your room that says this is who I am) 70% 2ND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music (Using music as a way to express yourself) 70% 3RD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking trips around the country 67% 4TH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing your image—clothes, fashion 56% 5TH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dating 46% 	1ST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career possibilities 79% 2ND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-defense 61% 3RD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing your time (Tips on how to develop time management skills) 59% 4TH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dealing with emotions 45% 5TH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in events that build leadership 45%

THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

WHAT WOULD YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IN THIS NEW PROGRAM JUST FOR GIRLS?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.



Truth #6

GIRLS NEED EMPOWERMENT:

BY GIRLS, FOR GIRLS

During the course of the 30 focus groups conducted nationwide with girls 11–17, an interesting phenomenon occurred – girls took ownership of the program they imagined through the process of creating it. The girls felt engaged and empowered by talking about creating the ideal program that gave them a series of options. Among current Girl Scouts ages 11–17, 81 percent felt the overall program would be more appealing if “girls like me designed the program.”

It would be great to let the girls help decide what activities and things to do in the group. Then the girls would get what they want... and their opinions would help make a difference.

– Tatiana, age 12

Girls would have a lot more fun doing activities that they and other teens planned.

– Maria, age 15

I would like the opportunity to do the same things that I just voted on. I want to be the one to help develop these programs, not be the one that can only sit back and wait to be affected by programs that were never made for me in the first place. And, because honestly... there are some things that need to change about the Girl Scouts and I think that now is the time to actually take what the girls like me want and feel and turn it into action.

– Katey, age 17

The need for empowerment is best demonstrated by the responses of girls 11–17 when asked what the balance should be between what the member girls do and what the adult advisors/counselors

do. Among girls 11–17, 96 percent of Girl Scouts and 95 percent of non-Girl Scouts felt that the members and advisors should share responsibilities equally or the members should have more responsibility than their adult advisors/counselors.

These girls truly want to share in the planning and responsibilities associated with running the group. They want to feel they are part of the process and that they directly impact the major decisions and plans. In addition, girls talked about a desire for personal control, the feeling that participating in the group’s planning process is “their right,” and their view of it as a new learning experience that will help them become tomorrow’s leaders.

I would like to have more options and flexibility to meet and do what we want. To share in the planning and feel that we are part of the process.

– Carla, age 14

If girls could create the program that would be big! It would give it a personality that was truly for girls and other girls would be interested.

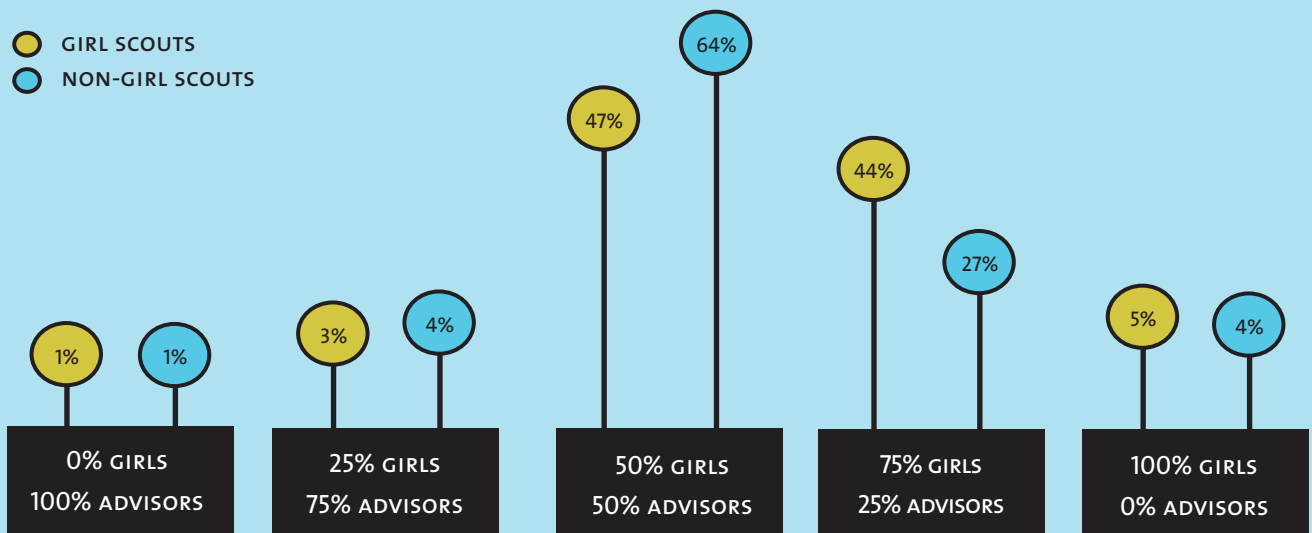
– Nancy, age 15

I am a Senior Girl Scout and it won’t be much longer until I graduate. I’ve been in Girl Scouts since I was young and I believe it has been a great experience, but there have been times when I almost quit. Older girls seem to grow tired of it and we need something to keep them interested. More girl-planned activities and sincere discussions would make a difference.

– Arie, age 16

WHEN IT COMES TO DETERMINING THE TOPICS AND PLANNING THE ACTIVITIES FOR THE GROUP, WHAT SHOULD BE THE BALANCE BETWEEN WHAT THE MEMBER GIRLS DO AND WHAT ADVISORS WOULD DO?

● GIRL SCOUTS
● NON-GIRL SCOUTS

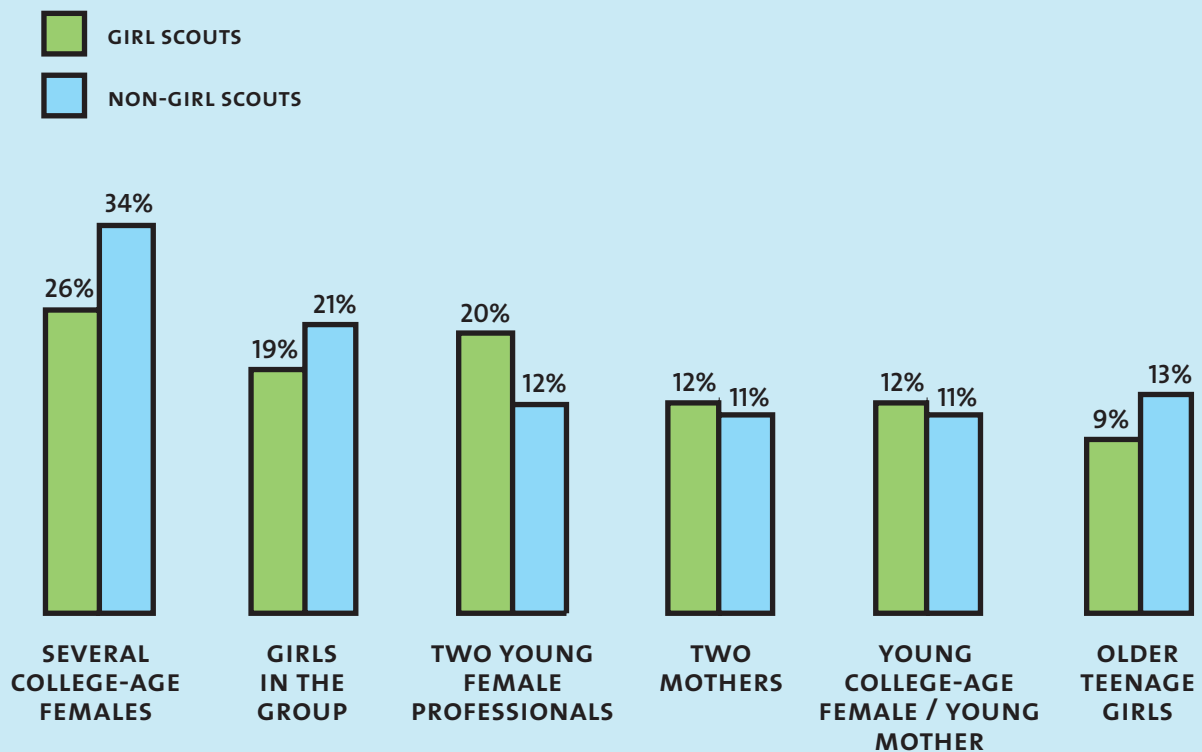




Truth #7

GIRLS WANT TO IDENTIFY WITH ADULT ADVISORS

WHO WOULD YOU WANT AS AN ADVISOR FOR YOUR GROUP?



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

Girls like us need someone to look up to? For me, it would be great to have several college-age girls involved in our group. They are closer to me in age and not too long ago went through the same things that I am going through now. College girls are responsible but fun, and they don't judge me.

CORDIE, AGE 12

Girls 11–17 clearly want to share in the group's planning responsibilities with an adult advisor. When girls were asked to describe their ideal adult advisor, common characteristics surfaced regarding an advisor's age, gender, and talents. First and foremost, girls emphasized that the adult advisor must be teen-savvy, know what preteen and teenage girls are experiencing, be responsible, and be fun.

Second, age is important. Girls 11–17 are looking for a group advisor who is closer to them in age and has experienced many of the same issues. Both in the focus groups and then in the on-line study, girls 11–17 indicated a definite preference to have as advisors young women ranging in age from 18 to 29 years old, from college students to young professionals. In addition, girls voiced a desire for a team of two advisors per group with varied backgrounds, interests, and experiences.



Having college age girls involved with the group would be cool! You can better relate to them than a mom or older adult. They are fun but are responsible. And they can also share with you on things you can be doing now to help you prepare for college. I think a lot of girls would like this!
 – Saquoia, age 15

Having several college-age females as advisors was preferred by 34 percent of current Girl Scouts and 26 percent of non-Girl Scouts. The preference for college-age females was highest among girls 16 and 17. The preference for having a mother as part of the team ranged from 1 percent to 12 percent, depending on the pairing of advisors to comprise a team (e.g., mother and father, college-age female and young mother, two mothers).

Current Girl Scouts were more adamant in expressing their concerns about having a mother as a leader. Their concerns ranged from not being able to openly discuss problems to the fear of being judged and reprimanded by the mother.

The problem with having a mother as a leader, especially a mother of a girl in the group, is that you can't be perfectly honest and talk about things that are bothering you. You think they will judge you rather than listening and talking it through. There are times when you just want a big sister to talk to, someone who can relate to what you are experiencing.
 – Sarah, age 11

GIRLS PREFER THE TERM ADVISOR TO LEADER

Girls 11–17 had definite opinions in favor of replacing the traditional *leader* title for the adult with the term *advisor* or *counselor*. They felt that the use of *leader* diminished the perceived role that girls would play within the group; the *leader* title conveyed on the adult power, authority, and control over the group and the planning process. As identified in the sixth truth, girls have a need for empowerment and want to share in the responsibilities of planning and running a group. An *advisor* or *counselor* is perceived as much more accessible to preteen and teen girls than a *leader*. Among current Girl Scouts 11–17, the term *leader* is associated with the stereotype and perceived mandate that only mothers of girls in the group can serve in this role.

I would like a chance to sit down and express yourself more and talk about issues with someone that is closer to your age. I kind of want to have some activities. I think you need both today to keep the interest of some girls.

RENNA, AGE 16

GIRLS WANT TO EXTEND THEIR GIRL SCOUTING EXPERIENCE

Several Senior Girl Scouts ranging in age from 15–17 talked about their Girl Scouting experience coming to an end when they graduate. Many talked about wanting to continue in Girl Scouting but being unsure of their options. Teens 15 to 17 were enthusiastic about taking on increased leadership roles so they could prepare to become future advisors and counselors for girls 11–17 when they enter college and beyond.



Truth #8

GIRLS PERCEIVE SOME ELEMENTS OF GIRL SCOUTING ARE “NOT FOR THEM”

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS? (RESPONSES FROM NON-GIRL SCOUTS)

GIRL SCOUTS SEEMS LIKE IT IS A LOT OF FUN

18%

GIRL SCOUTS IS FOR YOUNGER GIRLS AND SOMEWHAT OUT-OF-DATE

54%

THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

It seems it's all about work, meeting and earning badges. It's not fun anymore.

VANESSA, AGE 12

CURRENT PERCEPTIONS AND MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS

The fourth tier in the research model exposed the girls to Girl Scouts and discussed current perceptions and brand image. Four central themes emerged and are best expressed in the girls' own words:

It's only for young girls. it's okay when you're a Daisy or Brownie, but when you turn 11 or 12, it's just not cool or fun anymore.

– Marisa, age 12

Girl Scouts is out-of-date and out-of-touch.

– Terri, age 17

All you do is sell cookies and go to camp.

– Trace, age 11

It's not fun and it's not for me.

– Serena, age 13

WHERE IS THE FUN?

While these may be misperceptions, to a 13-year-old girl with no prior Girl Scouting experience, they are reality. Extreme differences in perception of Girl Scouting exist between those girls who are current or former Girl Scouts versus girls who have never been a Girl Scout. These perceptions are of particular concern when looking back at the primary reason that a girl 11–17 joins a group—to have fun! Only 18 percent of non-Girl Scouts believe that Girl Scouting seems like a lot of fun, leaving 82 percent who believe Girl Scouting is not fun. This is a psychological barrier that must be overcome to motivate a girl to place Girl Scouts on her mental list of potential groups to join.



GIRL SCOUTS – JUST FOR YOUNGER GIRLS

Currently, girls in the 11–17 range, known as Cadettes (11–13) and Seniors (14–17), comprise a very small percentage of the girls in Girl Scouting (12 percent). Historically, Girl Scouts has been successful with girls ages 5–10; however, success in retaining and recruiting girls ages 11–17 has been minimal. Girl Scouting reaches about 23 percent (1 in 4) of all girls at the Brownie age level (6–8 years old). By contrast, of the girls in the available population at large, only a little over 4 percent (or 1 in 23) are now Cadette Girl Scouts, and only 1.5 percent (or 1 in 68) are Senior Girl Scouts.⁸

According to the GSUSA year-end membership report for 2001, girl membership continues to be concentrated in the program's younger age levels. Significantly, the Daisy Girl Scout (9 percent), Brownie (46 percent), and Junior Girl Scout (33 percent) levels accounted for 88 percent of girl membership.⁹ With nearly 90 percent of the membership of Girl Scouts under the age of 11, the reality for a 13-year-old non-Girl Scout is that the majority of girls she knows who are Girl Scouts are in fact younger and not in her immediate circle of friends. During the nine months of research, it became apparent that there is a group of “stealth Girl Scouts”—girls 11–17 who like being a Girl Scout but do not broadcast it at school or outside their troop setting.

I don't think I am going to be doing it (Girl Scouts) for too much longer, because as you get older, most girls don't and for me it's kind of boring. I know a lot of people who are stopping because they can't keep up with their homework. But I want to stay for, I think, through Cadettes. I think I might stay until then and then I might quit.

– Katie, age 11

TIME IS THE NEW CURRENCY

Girls 11–17 form a mental checklist to compare the overall benefits of belonging to a particular group or organization with the overall time commitment required for participating in the group. Time is the new currency of teen girls. The number of activities competing for their involvement and participation is increasing, while the amount of time they have available to devote to these activities is decreasing.

It seems I have so much to do! What with homework and the pressures to do good in school, it is becoming harder to devote time to school and other groups that I enjoy but sometimes interfere with school. I wish I could do everything, but there just isn't enough time!

– Alisa, age 14

Girls voiced a perception that Girl Scouts appears to “take up a lot of time, with weekly troop meetings and work related to earning badges.” Among recent Girl Scout dropouts, issues included an overall lack of time that they could devote to Girl Scouting, the sense that it was no longer fun, and activities that were not age appropriate.

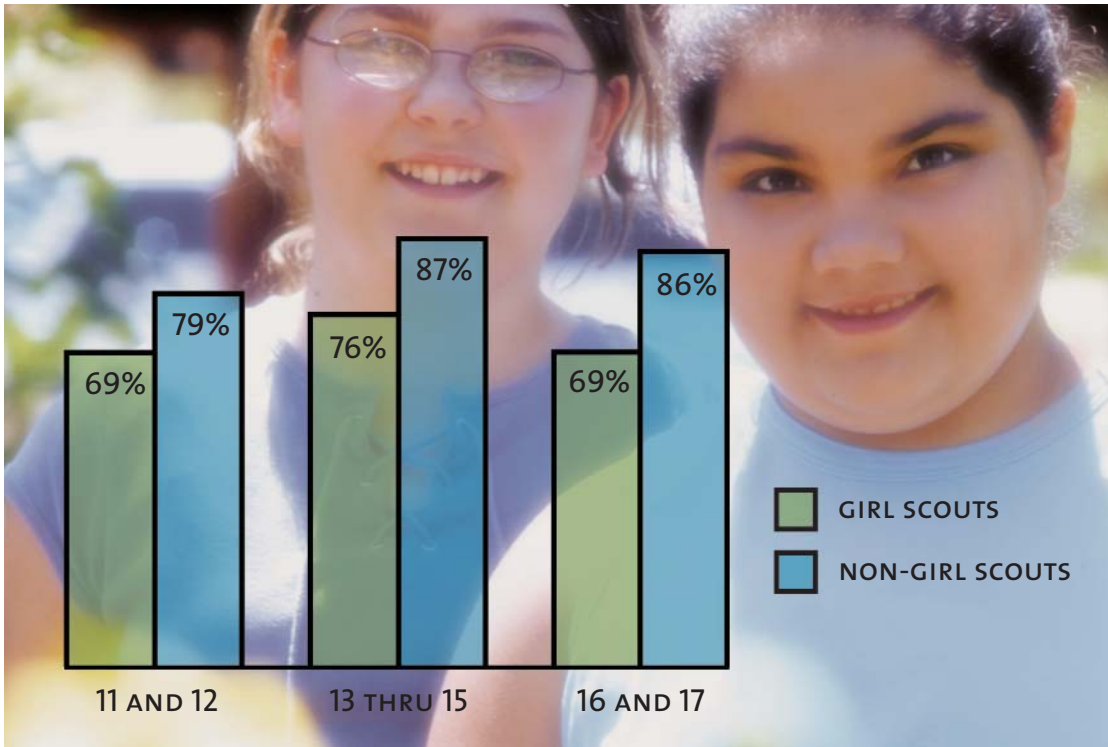
I used to be a Girl Scout, but I thought I was too old to be a Girl Scout any longer, so I quit. I would participate again if it could better include and address issues and things that are important to girls my age.

– Erin, age 15

DISTINCT PROGRAM OPTIONS FROM THOSE OF YOUNGER GIRLS

On average, three-quarters of the girls felt that Girl Scouts would be more appealing to girls if teenagers had a program separate from the younger girls. When asked how they would break out Girl Scouts by age, the majority of girls independently preferred different program options and activities that correspond to the needs and wants of girls in the three age groups of 11 and 12, 13–15, and 16 and 17.

GIRL SCOUTS WOULD BE MORE APPEALING TO GIRLS IF TEENAGERS HAVE A PROGRAM SEPARATE FROM THE YOUNGER GIRLS. (PERCENT RESPONDED “TRUE”)



THIS QUESTION CAME FROM THE ON-LINE STUDY AUGUST 10 – SEPTEMBER 10, 2001, WITH 1,262 GIRLS RESPONDING.

GIRLS WANT RESOURCES THAT ARE CURRENT, FUN, AND ADDRESS REAL ISSUES

Among Cadettes, 12 percent are using the *Cadette Handbook* on a regular basis. Among Seniors, 13 percent are using the *Senior Handbook* on a regular basis. At a 30 percent usage rate, the *Interest Project Book* is the resource used most often by Girl Scouts in the 11–17 age group.

When identifying the type and format of materials girls would want to have available to support their ideal program, girls 11–17 turned to what they know, enjoy, and use—teen-like magazines, Web sites, and activity-oriented packets. Incorporating contemporary graphics and photographs of “real girls doing real things” was a priority voiced by these girls. Forty-seven percent of girls felt that the best people to help develop these materials are older teens and young women who have experienced many of the issues.

BRANDING AND PERCEPTION OF PROGRAM NAME

Current Girl Scouts raised some concerns about being called:

CADETTES: SOUNDS UNPEACEFUL, TOO MILITARY
SENIORS: YOU THINK “SENIOR CITIZENS”

When asked to create an ideal name for the program, girls gravitated to names that were empowering, communicated a “connection,” and reflected a positive image of today’s girls.

First they would have to change the name because Girl Scouts has been known to be like this place where you sing songs, sell cookies and wear uniforms. So if you give it a different name

that sounds older and more mature and something you want to participate in.

– Sarah, age 11

REACHING EVERY GIRL ... EVERYWHERE

At 16 percent and growing, Hispanic girls represent the second largest ethnic group among the total U.S. population of girls 11–17. In keeping with GSUSA’s ongoing commitment to reach every girl, everywhere, a series of bilingual focus groups were conducted with Hispanic girls in Phoenix and New York City areas.

Among Hispanic girls interviewed in the research groups, several perceived that “Girl Scouts was just for ‘American’ girls... and not for us.” When asked to define ‘American’ girls, the most common definition used was a blond, blue-eyed, wealthy girl from the suburbs. This perception is also elevated in these groups due to an overall lower level of awareness of Girl Scouting—21 percent of Hispanic girls and 24 percent of African American/Black girls stated they “really don’t know that much about Girl Scouts other than they sell cookies and go camping,” approximately double the rate for similar responses from Caucasian/White girls.

Hispanic girls are clearly seeking a forum where they can express themselves and ask for information and assistance in solving their problems. They would like to build a sense of “trust” to allow for open discussions. The Hispanic girls shared many of the same interests, activities, and desires in creating their ideal program concept as non-Hispanic girls. In the process of developing their ideal program concept, they did voice specific perspectives and areas of conflict that they would like to address, such as bridging the cultural and language gap that may exist between home and school. Those interviewed want to “try” the program because the format, content, and the girls’ involvement in the group clearly would fulfill a need for them.



Truth #9

GIRLS WANT TO CONTINUE KEY GIRL SCOUT VALUES

We want to continue in girl scouts but in a new way. We are always told what to do, not asked, what we do we want to do. We want choices and the flexibility to do Girl Scouts along with other things that are important to us. The time I spend with the other girls is great and the special events, trips and community service. But it is a lot of work. I know this may sound selfish, but sometimes I like to do things for me that will help me now and in the future. To be able to talk and select things that we really want to do - that are fun and add to our overall Girl Scout experience.

OMOLOLA, AGE 16

Girls 11–17 clearly appreciate the core values of Girl Scouts—being part of a group and organization devoted solely to girls. An all-girl program reinforces the feeling that girls are valued for their abilities and the belief that they can do anything. It provides an environment where girls can be themselves and experience changes, challenges, and self-discovery. Current Girl Scouts want to continue this connection and relationship with Girl Scouts “but in a new way.”

BUT WHAT SHOULD THAT NEW WAY LOOK LIKE?

1. First and foremost, the program has to be by girls, for girls, empowering them and incorporating the needs and wants of girls 11–17.
2. Program delivery and materials need to be based on the three distinct age groups.
3. The program must be less structured, allowing girls to choose from a variety of participation options to address their current needs and busy schedules.
4. Teen-savvy young adults should be recruited and developed to serve as advisors for these new and engaged girls 11–17.

PROGRAM GOALS IN THEIR OWN WORDS: THE FOUR B’S

ALL GIRL SCOUT ACTIVITIES ARE BUILT ON FOUR PROGRAM EMPHASES:

1. Developing Self-Potential
2. Relating to Others
3. Developing Values
4. Contributing to Society

Many of the current Girl Scouts were unaware of the program emphases.

I didn't know there were set goals. I know the Girl Scout Promise.
— Marissa, age 13

After the girls developed their ideal program for their age group, they were asked to create a mission statement and goals for their group. During this process the following goals emerged:

BECOME

Celebrate yourself today and become your best self for the future.

BELONG

Be part of a group where you have fun, relate to others with respect, and develop lasting friendships.

BELIEVE

Develop your ideas and voice what’s important to you.

BUILD

Take action on what you care about and make a difference.



When girls 11–17 were asked if they liked these goals, 95 percent responded “yes.” Also, each of the four B’s meant something personal to each of the girls.

*I think **BECOME** should be a goal because you can enjoy who you are today but become your best self for the future. I want to be somebody when I grow up.*

– Ashley, age 14

BELONG is important because when you’re learning something, it’s always good to learn with other people. But you still have to be yourself; because that’s the way you are going to be true. You shouldn’t have to make yourself this way, or act this way to belong to the group.

– Shaneye, age 17

*I like **BELIEVE** as a goal ... because if I have something that’s in my head, I don’t want to keep it inside. If it’s important to me, I like to speak out and tell people.*

– Aliesha, age 17

*I like **BUILD** because there are things that I worry about, like the environment and homeless people, and I could do things to help and make a difference. You feel good about yourself and it’s fun!*

– Katie, age 12





Truth #10

GIRLS' TRUTHS WILL SET YOU FREE: FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

If I were President of Girl Scouts, I would let all the girls know that we are looking at making the program better for them... not only for the girls that are currently in Girl Scouts but all those girls that are looking to be part of something and want to make their lives better. But Girl Scouts has to change... it has to address the problems and things that we are going through now, not what girls were going through 20 years ago. What I like about it being for girls by girls... is that's it! We know what we want, let us know that we count, that you are listening.

MIKAELA, AGE 15

The goal of the *New Directions for Girls 11-17* research study was to greatly enhance the range of options for preteen and teen girls. The research study accomplished this by giving girls a voice in the process—a way to share their hopes, dreams, challenges, and fears and a forum in which they could “think big” about a program designed by them, for them. Now the mission is “Research to Action”—taking what has been learned from the *New Directions for Girls 11-17* research initiative and translating it into action, into a program concept that meets girls’ needs and wants.

Of course, the success of the *New Directions for Girls 11-17* initiative will be largely due to the 900,000 dedicated adults and volunteers in Girl Scouting. The findings of this study can serve as a directional tool for GSUSA’s efforts to better meet the needs of girls ages 11-17.





Overview of Truths



Truth #1

GIRLS 11–17 REPRESENT NEW AND GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

- Go where the girls are – growing population of girls 11–17.
- Develop “ideal” brand to get on girls’ “mental list” of preferred groups because most lifetime brand choices are formed by age 12.
- Seize the opportunity to fill the niche and need to connect within an all-girl environment.



Truth #2

GIRLS 11–17 REPRESENT THREE DISTINCT AGE GROUPS

- Target resources and materials for three age groups: Preteens (11 and 12), Teens (13–15), and Young Women (16 and 17).
- Educate adults about the differing needs and interests of girls in these three distinct age groups.
- Target outreach efforts on retention of girls 11 and 12. Need to hold them before stormier years of 13–15, when girls need Girl Scouting the most.



Truth #3

GIRLS NEED A SAFE PLACE... SAFE SPACE

- Offer a safe environment (emotionally and physically) where girls can express themselves and find their voice.



Truth #4

GIRLS CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER CONNECTS THEM TO YOU – GSUSA BECOMES THE LINK

- Offer menu of delivery options beyond the troop experience – allow girls to connect with each other and still be considered “real” Girl Scouts.
- Provide products and activities that promote connections with each other and allow girls to tailor activities to their particular interests (yearbooks, modular activity books, etc.).
- Extend Web site as way for girls to connect – high touch not high tech.
- Collaborate with schools and communities.



Truth #5

**GIRLS WANT EXPANDED OPTIONS:
“BRING IT ON AND LET US CHOOSE”**

- Offer range of activities and program resources that validate the image of today's girls (from high touch to high adventure).
- Address the “whole girl.”



Truth #6

**GIRLS NEED EMPOWERMENT:
BY GIRLS, FOR GIRLS**

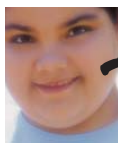
- Provide girls an ongoing opportunity to provide input – and let them know you are listening.
- Offer leader training for girls (summits/seminars).
- Develop team of girl/teen expert writers to produce materials content that speaks to girls.
- Redefine girl-adult partnership.



Truth #7

**GIRLS WANT TO IDENTIFY WITH
ADULT ADVISORS**

- Conduct a research study to better understand the motivations and interests to volunteer among young women 18–29.
- Recruit and develop teen-savvy adults.
- Develop parallel programs and resources for girls 11–17 and volunteer recruitment for advisors 18–29 years old.



Truth #8

**GIRLS PERCEIVE SOME
ELEMENTS OF GIRL SCOUTING
ARE “NOT FOR THEM”**

- Develop outreach and marketing initiatives to inform and educate – show contemporary image of Girl Scouts as a smart, exciting, and fun opportunity for girls to connect with other girls – segment by age and reflect range of diversity.
- Promote name, image, products as having been created by girls, for girls.



Truth #9

**GIRLS WANT TO CONTINUE KEY
GIRL SCOUT VALUES – THE FOUR B’S**

- Update program goals (Become – Belong – Believe – Build) in girls' own words.
- Update Girl Scouting to address challenges of today's girl.
- Position as fun and opportunity for meeting new friends, balanced with gaining new experiences and skills.
- Continue mission of reaching Every Girl, Everywhere. Increase efforts to inform African American and Hispanic girls that Girl Scouts is for them.



Concluding Truth



BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

The major goal of the *New Directions for Girls 11–17* research study was to greatly enhance the range of options available to 11- to 17-year-old girls in Girl Scouting through the revision of existing program elements and the creation of new ones.

The 3,000 girls 11–17 who participated in this study openly, honestly, and enthusiastically shared their vision for the ideal program.

When girls were asked whether they would be interested in participating if Girl Scouts were to sponsor such a program based on their input, those who indicated that

they would be interested in participating included 95 percent of current Girl Scouts 11–17 and 84 percent of non-Girl Scouts. Even more revealing is a closer look at the race/ethnicity of those girls 11–17 who said they would be interested in participating in such a program:

- 92 percent African American/Black
- 88 percent Caucasian/White
- 88 percent Asian/Pacific Islander
- 86 percent Hispanic

SO YES, BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME!

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